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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 000918

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DEPT FOR EUR/DAS BRYZA AND EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA RELEASES CHAKABERIA

REF: A. TBILISI 861

[B](#). TBILISI 759

[C](#). TBILISI 747 (NOTAL)

[D](#). TBILISI 739

[E](#). TBILISI 489

[F](#). TBILISI 459

[G](#). 06 TBILISI 3250

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4(b)&(d).

(C) Officials at the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) told us that the Georgian MFA had informed them that the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs had released Pridon Chakaberia early on April 23, and that Chakaberia was on his way from Kutaisi to his home in the Gali district. Chakaberia, an ethnic Georgian local official in Abkhaz-controlled Gali, had been arrested by Georgian officials in Zugdidi December 2006 (ref G), and subsequently convicted of charges connected to heroin possession and false documents. International observers reported significant deficiencies in his trial (ref A). Georgian officials had indicated to the Abkhaz at Geneva meetings in February (ref F) that they would be willing to release Chakaberia, as part of a sequence in which the Abkhaz released Georgian prisoners, but these plans appeared to stall after the Abkhaz jailed three Georgian students during a protest along the cease-fire line in March (ref E); the trial of these students has been postponed but they remain in Abkhaz custody. During his visit in late March, DAS Bryza stressed to a number of Georgian officials that releasing Chakaberia could help to reduce tensions (ref B, C, and D).

TEFFT